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# SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

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| Chairman: | Mr. PIRIZ-BALLON | (Uruguay) |
| later: | Mr. GUERRERO (Vice-Chairman) | (Philippines) |

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 78: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

1. Mr. FLEISCHHAUER (Under-Secretary-General, The Legal Counsel), introducing the Secretary-General's report on large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing (A/47/487), said that General Assembly resolution 44/225 had noted that many countries were disturbed by the increase in the use of large-scale pelagic drift-nets, which were widely considered to threaten the effective conservation of living marine resources, and recommended that moratoria should be imposed on all large-scale drift-net fishing by 30 June 1992 unless effective conservation and management measures were taken, that progressively large-scale drift-net fishing activities should be reduced in the South Pacific region with a view to cessation by 1 July 1991, and that further expansion of large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing in all the other high seas should cease immediately. General Assembly resolution 45/197 had called for full implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/225. General Assembly resolution 46/219 had recalled the two previous resolutions and called upon all members of the international community to achieve, by 30 June 1992, a 50 per cent reduction in large-scale pelagic high seas drift-net fishing, and to ensure that such fishing areas were reduced and that a global moratorium on such fishing was fully implemented by 31 December 1992.

2. The Secretary-General's report (A/47/487) had been drawn up on the basis of replies received to a note verbale from the Secretary-General. The first part of the report reviewed the contributions of intergovernmental organizations and drew particular attention to activities or conduct inconsistent with the terms of resolution 46/215. The second part presented a review by region. He noted the signature by Canada, Japan, the Russian Federation and the United States of America of the Convention for the Conservation of Anadromous Stocks in the North Pacific Ocean and drew attention to the increasing support for the Convention for the Prohibition of Fishing with Long Drift-nets in the South Pacific (the Wellington Convention). Numerous positive measures had been taken and he said that the Secretary-General hoped that further efforts would be made in that direction.

3. Mr. RAMACHANDRAN (Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the proposed United Nations conference on human settlements (Habitat II) (A/47/360) requested by General Assembly resolution 46/164), said that the Commission on Human Settlements had the previous year recommended the convening of a second United Nations conference on human settlements, to be known as Habitat II. The considerable achievements in the field of human settlements had not been sufficient to arrest and reverse deterioriation in the living conditions of the urban population in the developing countries, and even in the industrialized countries. In its resolution 46/164, the General Assembly had therefore decided to consider at its current session the question of convening a second conference on human settlements.

(Mr. Ramachandran)

4. The report outlined the current state of human settlements and attempted to analyse the current crisis of homelessness and inadequate shelter. The 1976 Habitat Conference had been held in response to that crisis, and had been followed by the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless in 1987, the adoption of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 in 1988, and the inclusion of a human settlements chapter in Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). Human settlements were the physical framework for sustainable development within which UNCED agreements and programmes would have to be implemented. The report pointed to some of the reasons for the insufficient progress which had been made since the first Habitat Conference, including issues such as urban environmental infrastructure, energy, urban transport, women in development, sustainable development and the impact of external debt and structural adjustment programmes. A world conference of the scope of Habitat II would therefore be both desirable and timely. He suggested that a special preparatory committee be established with universal membership of both States and all other interested groups, such as non-governmental organizations, civic and community groups, academic institutions, professional bodies, the business community and civic leaders at the local and municipal levels. The report expressed a preference for convening a conference in 1996 rather than 1997. There was the symbolic significance of 1996 as coming 20 years after the first Habitat Conference, and four years was ample time to make the necessary preparations; if the conference were to be held in 1996, the decision would have to be taken at the present session. The report contained no detailed statement of the programme budget implications of holding a second Habitat conference, but did identify a range of costs likely to be involved. Financial implications depended on a number of elements such as timing, venue and practical arrangements, which needed to be decided on first by the General Assembly.

5. Mr. MASOOD (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that despite the recommendations of the 1976 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, human physical living conditions had further deteriorated world wide, especially in the developing countries. It had not been possible in 1976 to foresee the full impact on human settlements of population growth, the urbanization of poverty and the increase in socio-economic stress caused in the developing countries by the implementation of structural adjustment programmes. The dismal statistics on urban living conditions contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/47/360) represented only the tip of the iceberg, and did not concern the rural population.

6. Action on human settlements required not only the participation of the private sector, but also the involvement of Governments. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) had addressed the issue of human settlements in the context of sustainable development. The eight programme areas identified in Agenda 21 required particular attention. It was time to review the decisions taken at the 1976 Conference and formulate new mechanisms for the implementation of effective human settlement policies, taking into account the environmental dimension. He was in favour of taking a

(Mr. Masood, Pakistan)

decision at the current session of the General Assembly regarding the convening of a second conference on human settlements, in particular in view of the Secretary-General's proposal to hold the conference in 1996 to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the first Conference. The task of organizing the proposed conference should be left to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements.

7. Mr. Guerrero (Philippines), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

8. Mr. CLARKE (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that a thorough review of the strategies recommended at the 1976 Conference on Human Settlements was becoming necessary in order to bring those strategies into line with the overall objectives of Agenda 21, and in particular, with its chapter 7, on promoting sustainable human settlement development. The unanimous recommendation of the Commission on Human Settlements to hold a review conference was therefore appropriate.

9. The development of major cities had had some positive effects, such as the creation of new job opportunities and changes in mentalities; but the focus of poverty was shifting from rural to urban areas the world over. While it would clearly be counterproductive if expenditure on urban areas merely encouraged the rural population to move to the cities, thereby exacerbating the problems, expenditure on housing, amenities, social security and welfare by many developing countries, and by international support and finance organizations, was nevertheless extremely low, resulting in a shortfall in urban shelter, infrastructure, transport systems and services. The quality of life in many cities in the industrialized countries had also deteriorated.

10. It had become apparent that Governments and local authorities alone could not manage and sustain the urban communities under their responsibility. Partnerships between public and private entities and the full involvement and participation of a well-informed population, including women, indigenous people, the elderly and the disabled, were essential to improving the social, economic and environmental quality of human settlements and the living and working environments of all people.

11. A second United Nations conference on human settlements should seek policies to halt the rapid deterioration in many people's physical living conditions and explore ways of increasing the current low levels of investment in human settlement development, providing an impetus to the activities set out in Agenda 21. The European Community and its member States supported the proposal to hold a second conference, Habitat II; but believed that adequate preparation was of crucial importance to its success. Before a final decision on the date was taken, the relative merits of 1996 and 1997 should thus be carefully examined. The General Assembly would need to establish a clear, streamlined and cost-effective structure for both the preparatory process and the conference itself, allowing for participation of all member States as well as of international organizations, local authorities and non-governmental

(Mr. Clarke, United Kingdom)

organizations. Environment and development experts, as well as experts from the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), should be included in the preparatory process. The European Community endorsed the Secretary-General's proposal that the secretariat of the Conference should be provided by Habitat.

12. The growth in the number of major international conferences brought with it a serious risk that their value and impact would be diminished by their regularity. It was of crucial importance that Habitat II should produce substantive results: the Secretary-General's proposals regarding the agenda of the conference thus merited careful attention. Full account should be taken of the work to be undertaken by the forthcoming World Summit on Social Development and the International Conference on Population and Development on poverty alleviation and population issues - issues which should not be the subject of formal negotiations at Habitat II.

13. The conference should be funded through existing United Nations budgetary resources, without negatively affecting its programmed activities, and through voluntary contributions to a trust fund established for that purpose. The cost of international conferences was clearly a matter of concern; and he noted in that regard the recent call by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management for a moratorium on the holding of new conferences. Nevertheless, the European Community and its Member States looked forward to participating actively in the preparation and negotiation of a draft resolution on the modalities of, and issues to be discussed at, Habitat II.

14. Mrs. AMERASEKARE (Sri Lanka) said that the significant progress made in the field of human settlements since the 1976 Conference had not been sufficient to arrest, let alone reverse, the deterioration in the living conditions of a vast segment of the world's population. The seriousness and complexity of the current human settlements situation called for urgent action to avoid a crisis. Over the coming decade, the developing countries, where enormous shortages of shelter already existed, would face the further challenge of providing shelter for an additional billion people. Furthermore, the urbanization of poverty had added new dimensions to the problem of shelter. Experience since the 1976 Conference had shown that Governments on their own could not meet the challenges of the complex and interrelated human settlement problems, and that many of the recommendations of that Conference required re-examination and updating, to take account of new perceptions of human settlement issues reflected in approaches like A New Agenda for Human Settlements and the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000.

15. A world conference with broad multidisciplinary and high-level participation could provide a forum in which to consider the planning, development and management of human settlements in the social, economic and environmental context of the next decade. Her delegation supported the convening of Habitat II at the earliest possible date, perhaps in 1996. It also supported the proposals regarding the formation of an intergovernmental

(Mrs. Amerasekare, Sri Lanka)

body contained in paragraphs 81 and 82 of the Secretary-General's report (A/47/360), as well as the process outlined in its paragraphs 87 and 91. Participation by local authorities, industrial, non-governmental and other community-based organizations must be ensured, as a means of enriching the conference proceedings. For reasons of economy, the conference secretariat should be drawn from the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, which had valuable expertise to offer.

16. Mr. MARKS (United States of America) said that it was encouraging to see in the report of the Secretary-General (A/47/360) greater recognition of the growing role played by urban areas in environmental issues - a role with positive as well as negative potential. Prospects for improving the sustainable management of the environment and the world's natural resources were intimately linked with the management of cities. It was also very encouraging to note the explicit recognition, in paragraph 21 of the report, of the productive nature of human settlements. However, the report failed fully to identify the crucial role of local governments in effective, sound development and management of human settlements and world resources. His Government believed that that issue should be addressed at Habitat II. It also supported the proposal to devote attention partnerships between the public and private sectors in line with the lessons learned by the development community since the 1976 Conference, and also with the way in which United States foreign assistance had evolved over the years.

17. The United States supported the convening of Habitat II in 1997. However, the relative merits of 1996 and 1997 should perhaps be carefully examined before a final decision on the date was taken.

18. Turning to the question of large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing, he called upon all members of the international community to implement and abide fully by the global moratorium called for in General Assembly resolution 46/215. The United States had already taken a number of steps to implement that resolution: United States nationals were prohibited from engaging in large-scale drift-net fishing; and his country had cooperated with others with a view to ensuring that areas of large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing on the high seas were not expanded. It had also ratified the Wellington Convention. The internationally agreed global moratorium on such fishing was a clear victory for the ocean environment. All member States should demonstrate their commitment to the protection of living marine resources by fully implementing that moratorium.

19. Mr. MINAGAWA (Japan) said that, as one of the principal supporters of General Assembly resolution 46/215, Japan had undertaken effective measures to implement paragraph 3 of the resolution by reducing both the areas in which large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing was permitted and the number of licences to engage in it. Those measures were detailed in paragraph 30 of the Secretary-General's report (A/47/487). He also stressed that his Government intended to take the necessary measures to implement the moratorium described in paragraph 3 (c) of General Assembly resolution 46/215 by 31 December 1992.

(Mr. Minagawa, Japan)

20. Paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Secretary-General's report, which referred to the conservation and management measures adopted by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), had no relevance to large-scale drift-net fishing. They should thus be deleted.

21. Mr. AKSIN (Turkey) said that, despite the success of the 1976 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in achieving a greater understanding and awareness of the problems, living conditions in many countries had continued to deteriorate. Alongside that deterioration, community services such as education and health were coming under increasing pressure. Demands on shelter, infrastructure and services were causing economic and social strains which could have very negative consequences on political stability. The ecological dimensions of rapid urbanization must also be borne in mind. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had highlighted the importance of taking environmental sustainability fully into account in the human settlement development process. But, while questions such as transport, urban water supply and waste management had been taken up at UNCED, the questions of shelter, construction technology and infrastructure had not been addressed. It was now clear that the issue of human settlements could no longer be seen in a North-South perspective, but must be treated within a comprehensive global setting. The report of the Secretary-General (A/47/360) highlighted the innovative ways in which developing countries had overcome many problems. They now had the opportunity to offer their own mix of solutions.

22. Turkey had supported the recommendation that a second United Nations conference should be held to address the broad range of human settlements issues. It favoured convening that conference in 1996, a date which, in addition to being the twentieth anniversary of the first conference, also coincided with the end of the second 4-year phase of the 12-year implementation period of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. As a country passing through a period of rapid urbanization, Turkey had taken a very close interest in the work of the United Nations dealing with human settlements: his Government was thus offering to host the conference in 1996. If that offer received the support of the General Assembly, a resolution should be adopted so that preparations for the conference could begin without delay.

23. Mr. FLORES (Honduras) said that rapid population growth, a variety of economic problems, natural disasters and rapid urbanization had seriously undermined the well-being of the developing countries, with serious consequences for human settlements.

24. One of the most positive results of the 1976 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements had been the adoption of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. The technical cooperation activities of the Centre for Human Settlements had also increased significantly during the past six years, and 14 Latin American countries received housing-related assistance from the United

(Mr. Flores, Honduras)

Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and States members of the European Community.

25. His delegation welcomed efforts such as the Sustainable Cities Programme carried out in 15 cities in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America, which had focused on various aspects of housing strategies to deal with uncontrolled population growth. The training programme in human settlements financed by the World Bank and the European Economic Community encouraged Governments to devise housing strategies and analyse modalities for technical cooperation between countries, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and society as a whole.

26. Affordable housing was a national priority in his country, and a national fund to promote the construction of such swellings had received the support of international development institutions. Government programmes focused on rural as well as urban areas, and also reached isolated communities.

27. The consolidation of democracy in Central America during the 1990s had encouraged a broader approach to housing problems which strove to satisfy not only the housing requirements of individuals, but also their basic needs with respect to drinking water, electricity, health, education and infrastructure. After implementing structural adjustment programmes to deal with their serious economic problems, Central American Governments were now encouraging self-help projects in the field of rural housing. The countries of Central America had also agreed to work together to confront human settlement problems, and had established a Central American council on housing and human settlements, which would work closely with other social service institutions.

28. The view of human settlements development which had emerged from the 1976 Conference on Human Settlements had drastically changed, and it was now internationally accepted that the role of Government should be to promote private sector initiative and to foster participatory involvement by communities and non-governmental organizations. His delegation therefore welcomed the proposal to convene a second United Nations conference on human settlements for the conference would provide an appropriate forum in which to pursue such efforts further.

29. In conclusion, he expressed his Government's appreciation to the European Economic Community, the international organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations for the assistance they had provided to his country's human settlements programmes and said that his Government looked forward to further cooperation in that field.

30. Mr. GATHUNGU (Kenya) said that the report by the Secretary-General on Habitat II (A/47/360) showed that the seriousness and complexity of the current human settlements situation called for urgent and concerted action within the United Nations system to mobilize the necessary will and resources to redress the attendant problems. Agenda 21, adopted at UNCED, rightly

(Mr. Gathungu, Kenya)

stressed the importance of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) in mobilizing increased international support for local programmes.

31. As the Secretary-General's report indicated, the factors contributing to the very serious state of human settlements throughout the world, particularly in the developing countries, including high population growth rates and rapid urbanization, deteriorating physical living conditions, an inadequate environmental infrastructure and its health consequences, the household energy crisis and deteriorating urban transport services. Moreover, the shelter crisis had imposed an especially heavy burden on the more vulnerable groups of society, in particular, women, children and the disabled.

32. His country was honoured to serve as host to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and had spared no effort in supporting its work and that of the Commission on Human Settlements to advance research and development, the dissemination of information and technical cooperation in the field of human settlements, including the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. The current National Development Plan (1989-1993) recognized the need for a sustainable development approach to human settlements, encouraged the provision of shelter through the rational exploitation and management of the nation's natural resources, and outlined an effective disaster preparedness programme. The implementation of the national housing strategy depended on the availability of domestic and external resources and appropriate technology.

33. His country's approach to human settlements problems placed the human person at the centre of the development process, in the belief that people must be provided with shelter, safe drinking water, sanitary living conditions, affordable sources of energy and means of transport and other related services, not only in order to improve their welfare but, even more important, to enhance their ability to make a productive contribution to the development process. His country, which favoured the "enabling approach" to that process, would continue cooperating closely with all countries, in both public and private sector initiatives, to achieve the goals of its housing strategy.

34. While considerable progress had been made since the 1976 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements with respect to the implementation of relevant policies and programmes at the national and international levels and living conditions in urban and rural areas had improved, a new impetus was needed to stop the rapid deterioration of human settlements. His Government strongly supported the convening of a second United Nations conference on human settlements, which should, in particular, develop innovative programmes with the support of Governments and the private sector to encourage self-help efforts of the population, with a view to ensuring improved, affordable and adequate shelter for all within the context of efforts to achieve economic and social progress and eradicate poverty.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.